

# The Builder.

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SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 1848.

**U**NST Monday we rambled to several places, and if our readers will let us do it over again, they shall hear something of what we saw. To get into the city now-a-days is no joke; inadequate thoroughfares, wholly in the possession of reckless and competing omnibus drivers, against whom Colonel Sibthorp sought protection in the House of Commons the other night, make the journey a work of time and trembling. Improvement in this respect is devoutly to be wished for by every resident or visitor whose life or time is worth any thing. At present, unhappily, there seems little prospect of it, but the daily increasing necessity must ultimately bring it about.

Twenty minutes were we fast in Fleet-street (and all know, that being fast there, is very slow work), but we felt anxious to see the Roman house recently opened, as mentioned last week, and bore the confinement as much like a philosopher as temperament would permit. In sober seriousness, however, we have many a time and oft travelled sixty miles on the Great Western Railway (profitably employed too, the while), in the time that was wasted in getting from Brompton to Lower Thames-street, on this said Monday morning. Surely there is matter for thought in this, and a pricking argument for improvement.

The new Coal Exchange, as our readers know, is to be built on a plot of ground in Thames-street, at the corner of St. Mary-at-Hill, nearly opposite to Billingsgate;\* and it is close to the eastern boundary of this piece of land that part of a Roman building has been laid open in digging for the foundations. The discovery has excited much interest, and the steps which have been taken by the parties in authority, with a view to an investigation of the building, and, it is to be hoped, its preservation, are very creditable to them, and shew that a different feeling prevails in the city from that which was dominant when, for many years, every remnant of ancient London which turned up was wantonly destroyed. The British Archaeological Association made early mention of it: on Thursday in last week Mr. Bunning, the architect engaged, forwarded a plan and description of the remains to the Society of Antiquaries; and on Tuesday last they were fully illustrated at a meeting of the Freemasons of the Church.†

The remains consist chiefly of part of an apartment (or it may have been a passage-way), paved with common red tesserae, each about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  inch square, and a hypocaust which is semicircular on one side, and projects, as a bow, before the outer wall of the first-named apartment: this outer wall is 3 feet thick, built of tile-like bricks on a course of Kentish rag stone, and the mortar contains pounded brick, now understood to be an unfailing sign of Roman work. The commonness of the pavement (compared with the fine specimens of

Roman pavements discovered as well in London as in various parts of the country) would seem to shew that this apartment was appropriated to common purposes.

The heating chamber—the hypocaust (not hypocaust, or bath, as it is erroneously expressed)—is exceedingly interesting, and becomes more so when carefully examined, as it is found to agree to half an inch in all the dimensions with those given by Vitruvius, in his instructions for forming the *hypocaustum*.

The hypocaust, as all our readers doubtless know, was a hollow floor, so to speak, communicating with a furnace by a flue, so as to receive the heated air when wood was burnt in the furnace, and thus warm equally the apartment above. A sound bottom having been formed, little brick pillars, 8 inches square, Vitruvius says, were raised, about 2 feet from centre to centre, and about 2 feet high. On the top of these piers large bricks, stretching from one to the other, were placed, to cover in the whole, and upon these a layer of pounded tile and chalk, covered with a fine cement, or a mosaic pavement, formed the floor.

The hypocaust in Thames-street agrees with this in every respect. The piers are  $\frac{3}{4}$  inches square, 2 feet from centre to centre—leaving a space between each, therefore, of from 15 to 16 inches square,—and 2 feet high. The bottom of the hypocaust is formed of concrete, and the covering tiles carry a layer of the same material to form the floor of the apartment above. Similar constructions, both abroad and at home, have been found to agree in this manner with the foregoing description: but when we put a rule to the parts of the hypocaust in question, opened to view after the lapse of so many centuries, and found the dimensions agree, the confirmation came more strongly home, and interested us much. Again, Vitruvius says that the bricks forming the little piers were not put together with mortar, because of the effect heat would have on it, but with clay: and when we carefully lifted off one of our Thames-street tiles, we found, with great satisfaction, this had been the case there also.

We should mention that the flue, which opens into the hypocaust by two branches, divided by a triangular mass of brickwork, and four piers similar to those already described, extends eastward under the adjoining premises, and has been probed to an extent of 14 feet.

It is most likely that the room above this hypocaust was a bath, but we think not necessarily so: there are passages in ancient writers which shew that the Romans used a similar arrangement to heat ordinary apartments. Pipes opening into the hypocaust were inserted in the walls, and conducted the warm air to various parts of the structure: some pipes of this description were found at the building in question, but we are not aware in what position.

The apartment first described exhibits a feature which, although we think not part of the Roman construction, has led to much discussion. This is the remains of what appears to be a well, about 2 feet clear diameter, formed of neatly wrought blocks of chalk on an clin curb, and coming down from nearly the present level of Thames-street to within a few inches of the tessellated pavement. It would seem that those who constructed the well could not have known of the existence of the pavement, or they would have sunk the former a little deeper,

to get a sound bottom for their curb.\* There are difficulties in the way of opening the ground eastward, but we trust these will be overcome to a certain extent, and that further investigations will be made.

Leaving the site of this very interesting discovery, we made our way to the Golden-lane district, concerning the miserable state of which, in a sanitary point of view, we recently spoke,—intending to make some further inquiries concerning it. In the course of the perambulation we were startled by an apparition of old St. Bartholomew's Church, which used to stand by the Bank, with its curiously-finished, or rather unfinished, tower, looking as if the top had been blown down, leaving on each side a doorway, or window-frame, standing alone. It appears that the Bishop of London, when applied to for his sanction to the proposed removal of the old church, stipulated that a new church should be erected in the neighbourhood, and the internal fittings and decorations having been preserved, and apparently some of the stonework too. Mr. Cockerell, to whom the commission was given, has made the church as nearly like the old one as possible: the main difference inside is, that it has no clerestory, which the original church had, and has galleries, which the old one had not. It is nearly ready for consecration.

Returning, we looked into Mr. Sydney Smirke's new coffee-room at the Carlton Club, Pall Mall, which was opened to the members last week. It is a handsome apartment, 93 feet long, 37 feet wide, and 21 feet 3 inches high, formed into three compartments by Corinthian columns on pedestals (four pairs), which project into the room. The fire-place is in the middle of the long side of the room, and the entrance door is opposite to it. The dressings of the latter include columns of French marble.† There are three windows at each end, and a large octagon light over the centre compartment. The ceiling is formed with deeply recessed panels, highly enriched, with a handsome frieze beneath, and is polychromatised by Mr. Sang, in a more artist-like manner than any thing he has before done. The walls are lined with satin-wood to a certain height, and above that are painted in panels of faint greens. The columns are green scagliola with white capitals, gilt, and black and gold pedestals. The effect of the whole is very satisfactory. Some elegant candelabra by Whitfield and Hughes deserve commendation.

The British Gallery, nearly opposite, was opened to the public that day, and we paid a visit to it on leaving the Carlton. The mismanagement of this institution is so well known, the abuses which prevail there are so universally and so loudly talked of, that repetition seems unavailing. As might be expected under such circumstances, the exhibition is but of indifferent character as a whole, although it contains a number of very nice pictures. Danby, Linnell, Ansell, Lance, Linton, Cooke, Lee, Goodall, Branwhite, Hildebrandt, Sidney Cooper, Parris, Inskip, Marshall, and Sir G. Hayter, are amongst the most successful exhibitors: we must give the collection, however, separate consideration hereafter.

\* The discovery of wells lined with chalk is not unusual in the City: one was found in 1836, in Maiden-lane, now Gresham-street. At the meeting of the Freemasons of the Church, Mr. Papineau suggested that the well being formed to receive the water which percolated from the Thames, chalk might have been used in the shape of a lining to the well for the purpose of purifying it.

† It would be well if we were better acquainted with the extent and variety of marbles obtainable from France.

\* An engraving of the proposed building is given in vol. v., p. 586.

† Mr. Stothard read a paper on the subject; and Mr. C. H. Smith, Mr. W. P. Griffith, Mr. G. Godwin, and others, gave additional information. We are compelled to postpone our ordinary report of the meeting, as we are of the last meeting of the Institute of Architects, till next week.